



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900

Boston, MA 02114-2119

Mitt Romney
GOVERNOR

Kerry Healey
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Stephen R. Pritchard
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000
Fax: (617) 626-1181
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 16, 2006

Contact: Vanessa Gulati

617-626-1119

Secretary Golledge Grants Waiver, Construction Can Begin on Recreational Trail Along Former Penn Central and Pioneer Valley Railroads

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) Secretary Robert W. Golledge, Jr. announced that a waiver has been granted for the construction of a recreational trail along the former Penn Central and Pioneer Valley Railroads. The project, known as the Westfield-Southwick Recreational Trail Project, will extend from the Westfield River south to the Connecticut border, covering a distance of approximately 9.3 miles. The northern terminus of the trail will directly connect to downtown Westfield via the Women's Christian Temperance park. The southern terminus of the trail will have direct access to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail in Suffield, Connecticut. The City of Westfield and the Town of Southwick will work in conjunction with the Massachusetts Highway Department to complete this project which will be maintained by the Towns of Southwick and Westfield.

The construction of the project has been divided into five sections. In all of the sections proposed work will generally include the removal of the remaining railroad ties, construction of a 10 to 12.5 foot paved path and graded shoulders, construction of several access paths to the main trail, and the construction of several small parking areas. Along the trail numerous bridges and drainage structures will need to be either repaired or replaced, fences or guardrails will need to be installed in steeply sloped areas, traffic signals and crosswalks will be installed, along with informational signs and pavement markings. Finally, several rest areas will be constructed along the trail, which will include bicycle racks, benches, picnic tables and trash receptacles.

Golledge granted the waiver because the project is likely to provide a number of environmental, public health and economic benefits. Golledge said, "this greenway project will become an excellent source of local recreation, as well as provide alternative transportation opportunities to surrounding communities." Denial of a waiver would have resulted in an undue hardship for the Commonwealth, as the resulting process would delay the public's ability to access this significant resource.

###